



Performing Ocean: An Exploration of Intrapersonal Communication within Artistic Research

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Final thesis for a Master of Music degree in New Audiences and Innovative Practice (NAIP)
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Acknowledgments

The journey into the deep ocean is a long, perilous, and lonely one. It is not a task for everybody, let alone a single person. How relieved I am knowing that I'm not alone on this long, perilous, yet lovely journey.

I strolled on the beach, confused and anxious. Dipping my feet into the sea from time to time, but never more. I didn't dream of deep-sea exploration because I was busy thrashing the water. It was when I met Dr. Angela Rawlings that things made sense for the first time. Her expertise stretches across different waters, and her knowledge is as deep as the ocean. She has been the greatest help in every aspect of this artistic research project, and never fails to inspire me as an artist, a writer, a fellow ecology enthusiast, and a person.

Traveling across the sea of Iceland can pose many challenges for those unfamiliar with it. Dr. Berglind María Tómasdóttir is, however, a person who would point out how fun and unique the ride can be. She has been a major support through my study, especially in helping me expand my musical practices within an expanded field where jellyfish and lanternfish exist proudly.

My journey would not have happened without Professor Sigurður Halldórsson who has done a splendid job at maintaining the dock for every boat that will set course into the ocean.

I would like to thank Ása Ólafsdóttir, Ana Luisa Diaz de Cossio, and Tryggvi Þór Pétursson for being wonderful jellyfish and a navigator during the showcase of this project.

Lastly, to my friends and family across the ocean: though we are apart, it's the same wind that blows from me to you and back. Thank you.

Abstract

A careful examination of one's own mind is a possible method of gaining a better understanding of one's psychological core, as well as establishing a deep and personal connection with one's surroundings. *Performing Ocean: An Exploration of Intrapersonal Communication within Artistic Research* is an artistic research project and showcase aiming to create a system that assists intrapersonal communication and its artistic expression through introspection, musical composition, and performative interpretation. The ocean serves as a metaphor for the complexity of human consciousness and a subject of study that reflects the relationship between my mind and the environment. *Performing Ocean: An Exploration of Intrapersonal Communication within Artistic Research* consists of three components: *sketches*, *scores*, and *interpretation*. *Sketches* are primary materials indicative of one's consciousness, obtained through the methods of self-documentation. *Sketches* become fundamental elements for *scores* utilizing several compositional techniques. The *scores* function not only as a medium of communicating the messages of the artist, but also invite performers' artistic and personal input through interpretative possibilities presented in the *scores*.

Performing Ocean: An Exploration of Intrapersonal Communication within Artistic Research was first showcased to the public by means of a performance and an installation. Six out of seven original compositions were performed and a booklet containing a number of *sketches*, all *scores*, and descriptions of the research and its methodology were displayed on the wall of the performance venue.

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Chapter I: The Seashore

One can spend most of their life on land without really knowing about the deep sea. Similarly, one can live a life without awareness of their own mind. *Performing Ocean: An Exploration of Intrapersonal Communication within Artistic Research* (referred to henceforth as *Performing Ocean*) is an artistic research project that involves looking into my own consciousness while looking around the world in search for a connection between the surroundings and myself. Interlinking the land (the surroundings) with the sea (the consciousness) is a seashore. It is where every diver commences their deep-sea exploration.

The Diver

The relationship I have with music has always been intimate and personal. Due to the nature of my training as a pianist, I spent the majority of my musical education on my own. In my youth, engaging in music was not only an act of leisure but also a way in which I comprehended and regulated my emotions as it offered opportunities for contemplation and reminiscence. I identified music as essential to my core existence.

Later, I began to take particular interest in the connection between the personal lives of humans and their surroundings, and making music was a main tool of exploration. In 2019, I shot and edited footage of Bangkok to accompany Bela Bartok's *Out of Doors*, and showcased my interpretation of the music visually as well as sonically. In 2020, I moved to Iceland where I continued to foster fascination for the world around me. It was during this period that I explored other mediums that would enable me to express myself as profoundly as music, while allowing me to establish a connection or gain a better understanding of the world. Investigating my own interest in the environment, I was drawn to the mystery and richness of the deep ocean. Scientific knowledge of the deep ocean is still minimal compared to the surface of the ocean.

Yet, it has been discovered that the deeper parts of the ocean are essential to the survival of humans and marine life due to its significant role in carbon sequestration.¹

Apart from looking for new artistic possibilities, I also reviewed my musical practice—in particular, the definitions of instrument, composition, and performance. From my background as a classical pianist, I began to expand my practice to composition, writing, and performance studies with a focus on reflecting and strengthening the personal relationship with one's surroundings.

Performing Ocean arises from my experience living in Iceland where I struggled with cultural and locational acclimation. Originally, *Performing Ocean* commenced as an attempt to study the mechanism of empathy: a direct inquiry into the feelings of isolation and loneliness I endured. Some of the key points of this study included what is empathy, what causes a lack of empathy, and how empathy emerges especially in a cross-cultural context. Later on, the idea of empathy ceased to be in the forefront of this research. It remained a part of *Performing Ocean*—a model that utilizes the documentation of one's consciousness as primary material for artistic creations that allows both the personalities of the composer and performer(s) to manifest.

A crucial component of *Performing Ocean* is the exploration of my consciousness—emotions, memories, wishes, values, and thoughts—through the methods of introspection. Introspection can take many forms, such as writing and making a monologue. It is a simple yet powerful action that functions as intrapersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication is a communication with oneself that may include self-talk, acts of imagination, visualization, and recollection of memories.² Due to its nature, this type of communication often remains unheard or unmonitored. Apprehending our own intrapersonal communication and making use of its potential can fulfill the urge to express ourselves, be understood, and connect with our surroundings.

¹ Ken Buesseler et al., “The Ocean Twilight Zone's Role in Climate Change” (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution), accessed May 2, 2022, <https://twilightzone.whoi.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-Ocean-Twilight-Zones-Role-in-Climate-Change.pdf>.

² Scott McLean, in *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication* (Boston: Pearson, 2007).

Engaging with our consciousness in a profound way is important for the regulation of emotions because it allows for a period of time to assess any situation before acting out. Lastly, it can simply be entertaining, therapeutic, or comforting for us and others to relive or realize our memories, fantasies, or wishes. In *Performing Ocean*, I collected and compiled self-documentation to use as the basis for my compositions and performances.

As much as *Performing Ocean* is about self-exploration, it is not my intention that the research is purely concerned with self-indulgence. It is important to understand the relationship between us and our surroundings by not only being aware of what circulates in the mind, but also any external factors that influence our behaviors and personalities. Obtaining knowledge of one's self through a thorough examination of the mind can pinpoint one's innermost values or psychological needs. By identifying and fulfilling these crucial components, one can establish empathetic ties that may extend beyond human beings to other living and non-living entities.

I believe that the particular system developed in *Performing Ocean* can reinforce intrapersonal communication as a potential artistic practice. Since intrapersonal communication happens within everybody, an artistic practice based on it may become a powerful tool for non-verbal expression of selves, which has the potential to bypass language barriers, cultural differences, and feelings of distrust that can hinder successful and fulfilling communication. In the future, I wish to develop *Performing Ocean* as a practice that can help people engage with their inner psychological cores while investigating personal ties with their surroundings through a reflective and conscious way of living. In a way, *Performing Ocean* is an invitation to investigate one's own "seashore" that mediates between "the land" and "the sea."

Chapter II: The Oceans

Rainer Maria Rilke's 1898 play *Die weiße Fürstin* features the line "Die Welt ist groß, doch in uns wird sie tief wie Meeresgrund"³ or *The world is large, yet in us it is as deep as the sea*. Upon inspecting this quote, one may conclude that the meaning of it according to the author is open to interpretation. Nonetheless, the quote does direct our attention to two points: One, there exist certain qualities that distinguish an individual from "the world" around them. Two, the analogy with the deep sea implies that there are parts about oneself that one has not and, perhaps, will not be able to recognize, witness, or fully understand.

Two kinds of oceans were explored in *Performing Ocean*. One refers to the immense body of saltwater that expands across the world. Another is the immense body of consciousness that is unique to each person. Two different oceans, however, are highly complex and challenging to comprehend. Establishing a connection between the two oceans and commencing an investigation into them can be a way to strengthen the knowledge of oneself, the world, and the connection between them. At this point, one might ask: what are the similarities between the ocean and the human consciousness? And how can the investigation be made?

The Reflection

Pondering the above questions, it is natural that an exchange of ideas occurs to some extent in the mind of a reader. This transmission of thoughts within one's mind is called intrapersonal communication. As stated in Chapter I, intrapersonal communication is a communication with oneself that may include self-talk, acts of imagination, visualization, and recollection of memories. It is a primary type of communication since idea, decision, and plan is often mentally processed before being conveyed externally.⁴ *In Performing Ocean* interpersonal communication is a rudimentary artistic source that is examined and highlighted by means of introspection.

³ Rainer Maria Rilke, "Die Weiße Fürstin," in *Ohne Gegenwart / Die Weiße Fürstin: Dramen* (North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), p. 208, <http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Rilke,+Rainer+Maria/Dramen/Die+wei%C3%9Fe+F%C3%BCrstin/Szene>.

⁴ James M. Honeycutt et al., "Intrapersonal Communication and Imagined Interactions," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 323.

Introspection is a reflective looking inward or an examination of one's own thoughts and feelings.⁵ It was a method of psychology endorsed by psychologists such as Wilhelm Wundt and Edward Bradford Titchener in the early 20th century in examining the immediate experience of consciousness.⁶ David M. Rosenthal, philosopher, expanded on the definition of introspection to include not merely being aware of the conscious states, but having attentive, reflective, and deliberate access to the states.⁷ One can have access to different conscious states, but may not reflect on the relevancy of them to other mental properties such as behavior and self-perception. Therefore, introspection is not only the perceiving of our conscious states, but the having of thoughts about them.⁸ The expanded definition of introspection by Rosenthal is evident in the methods of *Performing Ocean* as the *sketches*—an acquired collection of conscious fragments, as explained in Chapter III—not only demonstrate physiological and conscious states, but also the accompanying thoughts in most cases.

Introspection has had a close connection with a concept of self-knowledge, a general concept focused on an individual's perception of themselves, what constitutes it, and the acquisition of self-knowledge. The accuracy of self-knowledge, by means of introspection or not, has long been a subject of debate by philosophers and psychologists of different ideologies. For example, Emmanuel Kant argued in favor of Idealism that the study of the mind would be futile, as it was impossible to observe the mind without alternating it.⁹ To prove the validity of introspection as a method of acquiring self-knowledge is, however, not the objective of this research. It is the personal and often unspoken intrapersonal communication assisted and made manifest by different means of introspection that is the essence of *Performing Ocean*. Three methods of engaging with one's mind—freewriting, photographic self-portrait, and monologue recording—were utilized in *Performing Ocean*, and they are explained in detail in Chapter III.

⁵ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “introspection,” accessed May 6, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/introspection>.

⁶ Britannica, T, ed., “Encyclopedia Britannica,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 27, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Wilhelm-Wundt>.

⁷ David Rosenthal, “Introspection and Self-Interpretation,” *Philosophical Topics* 28, no. 2 (2000): p. 201.

⁸ *Ibid*, 206.

⁹ Kurt Danziger, “Introspection: History of the Concept,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), p. 702.

Because the human mind is highly distinctive, introspection of one's mind opens up the possibilities of transforming the conscious contents—e.g., emotions, thoughts, intentions, and sensory experiences—into unique and individualistic material for artistic creations. Although these creations are highly personal in nature, they can become a platform that can instigate empathetic resonance or mutual feelings among participants. They allow one to establish non-verbal connection within other people, while examining one's own mind.

The Deep

Alluding to the opening quote of this chapter, one's interior world of consciousness and personality is deep and subject to exploration. Many psychologists have constructed theories on the constitution and drives of a human mind. In 1896, Sigmund Freud established an influential psychological approach with techniques called psychoanalysis, based on the idea that humans are strongly influenced by unconscious drives. Freud first theorized that a human mind consists of three layers: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious.¹⁰ The conscious level is the immediate perception and awareness of any sensation and experience. The preconscious is any thoughts, memories, or sensations that are not present but can be recalled to the conscious mind. Freud believed that these two states represent only the surface when it comes to comprehending the human mind. It is the unconscious level that has a controlling influence on our personality, yet it remains inaccessible to its owner.

These terms were later developed into a model that proclaims human personality is composed of *ego*, *superego*, and *id*. According to this theory, humans are driven by instinctual drives to seek physical and psychological pleasure and to avoid discomfort. Another drive is an internal moral judgment that is established during childhood. These primary forces are the *id* and the *superego* respectively, and both correspond to the unconscious level mentioned earlier. What mediates between the *id* and the *superego* is the *ego*. The *ego* is the conscious and rational mind that attempts to realize the demands of the *id* while maintaining balance with the *superego* and reality.

¹⁰ Duane P. Schultz and Sydney Ellen Schultz, "Sigmund Freud: Psychoanalysis," in *Theories of Personality* (Boston, Massachusetts44: Cengage Learning, 2017), pp. 44-47.

Using the Freudian theory that speaks of different levels of human personality as a starting point, I investigated a way of transmitting this psychological concept to non-human occurrence. Supplemented by Rilke's quote, an ocean ultimately became the subject of study and a metaphorical representation of human consciousness owing to its complex ecology and physical features. Adopting the ocean as a symbol instigated a parallel research on oceanic phenomena and fauna. In retrospect, expanding the exploration to include non-human entities and applying that knowledge to this artistic research project was an essential step that indicated my intimate relationship with the world, and a from-the-inside-out perspective on it.

Mesopelagic Zone

Due to the immensity of the ocean, the oceanic part of the research focuses specifically on the mesopelagic level of the ocean. Existing phenomena and specimens from the mesopelagic zone served as original artistic materials and, at the same time, were linked to several *scores* I had composed. The mesopelagic zone, also known as the twilight zone, of the ocean exists from two hundred to one thousand meters below the surface area. Only the very top part of the mesopelagic zone receives sunlight. The temperature and exposure to sunlight decreases with depth. The bottom part of the mesopelagic zone is dark and cold, with the temperature around four degrees celsius. Despite its harsh conditions, biodiversity in the mesopelagic zone is highly rich, as tons of animals such as planktons, mollusks, fishes, and gelatinous entities live there. It is estimated that the largest populations of fishes feed or live in the mesopelagic zone.¹¹ This massive aggregation of marine life makes the mesopelagic zone a crucial component in the survival of ocean life and terrestrial beings, including humans. Not only does the tremendous amount of zooplanktons present serve as food sources for commercially sought fishes, a unique phenomenon called diel vertical migration that occurs in the mesopelagic zone also plays an essential role in the regulation of carbon cycle.

¹¹ Ken Buesseler et al., "The Ocean Twilight Zone's Role in Climate Change" (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution), accessed May 2, 2022, <https://twilightzone.whoi.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-Ocean-Twilight-Zones-Role-in-Climate-Change.pdf>.

In my research, the intermedia property of the mesopelagic zone was likened to the Freudian concept of the mediating ego where conscious and preconscious thoughts and various states symbolized mesopelagic animals and phenomena.

Diel Vertical Migration and the Carbon Cycle

Diel vertical migration is a massive migration that occurs twenty-four hours in and throughout the mesopelagic zone. In the night, marine life from the mesopelagic zone migrates to the surface of the ocean to feast, descending during the day. Diel vertical migration helps maintain a healthy balance of marine and terrestrial environments. Billions of metric tons of carbon dioxide absorbed by the ocean enters the marine food chain when it is converted by phytoplanktons via photosynthesis. Diel vertical migration allows animals to consume these phytoplanktons and transport carbon into the deep ocean when they migrate downward. This also occurs in the form of falling tiny organic pellets called marine snow, which becomes food for animals in deeper parts of the ocean. The carbon transported to the deep ocean is estimated to remain for centuries.¹²

Diel vertical migration and the carbon cycle were reflected in my composition *Diel Vertical Migration* and the cyclic use of the musical material. In the composition, a multitude of *sketches* were recorded and transmitted through three Bluetooth speakers which were carried around in the dark performance venue by three performers. It represents a nocturnal migration of my conscious thoughts and emotions, and also a brief exhibition of them to the public. An illustration of diel vertical migration made by me was included in the booklet containing a number of *sketches*, all *scores*, and descriptions of the research and its methodology (see figure 1).

¹² Ibid.



Figure 1. An illustration of diel vertical migration.

The carbon cycle inspired cyclic use of an historic composer's musical material. The first Contrapunctus of Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Art of Fugue* appeared in its original form in the showcases's second video commentary/interlude. It later reappeared as two different versions in *Lan(d)ternfish* and *make Yourself disappear*: as an arrangement for four table lamps and as performative material respectively. Figure 2 displays the first twelve notes of the Contrapunctus aligned in a circle. It is preceded with a text explaining what the carbon cycle is, thus anticipating the cyclic use of Contrapunctus as musical material.

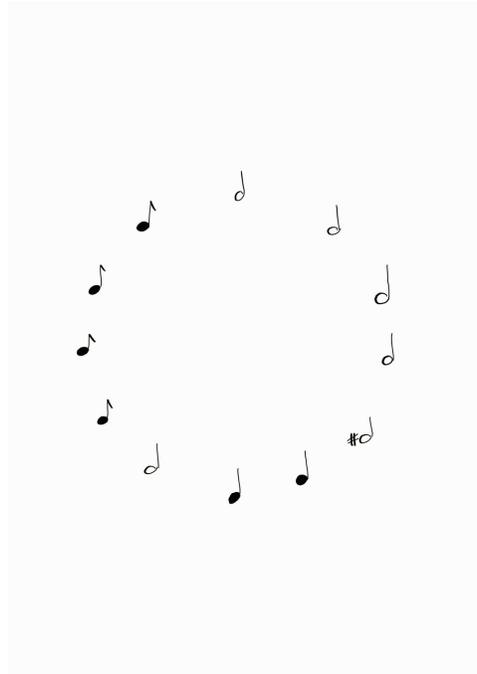


Figure 2. The first twelve notes of the Contrapunctus aligned in a circle.

Lanternfish

Due to the absence of light, most mesopelagic animals have evolved to use bioluminescence for hunting or evading predators. Lanternfish are prevalent in the mesopelagic zone and their bioluminescent glands are aligned on their bellies. Lanternfish rely on bioluminescence to appear invisible to predators below them and to communicate with each other.¹³ *Lan(d)ternfish* combined two *sketches* that mentioned or had strong references to flickering lights caused by the bioluminescent transmission of lanternfish.

¹³ The Ocean Twilight Zone Team, "Creature Feature: Lanternfishes," Ocean Twilight Zone (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution), accessed May 4, 2022, <https://twilightzone.whoi.edu/explore-the-otz/creature-features/lanternfishes/>.

Chapter III: The Exploration

Methods

Processes leading up to the showcase of *Performing Ocean* consists of three components which were conducted in chronological order. They are *sketches*, *scores*, and *interpretation*.

Sketches

Sketches are fundamental to *Performing Ocean* and consist of any conscious thoughts, wishes, values, and emotions that were gathered through introspection. *Sketches* would be used as the basis for subsequent *scores*. *Sketches* derive from the act of sketching, a rough or incomplete drawing often made to assist the realization of the work later. Despite their innate association with illustration, *Sketches* are not limited to that of drawing or writing. In this research, I explored three methods of acquiring the *sketches*: freewriting, photographic self-portrait, and monologue.

Freewriting

Freewriting or automatic writing involves writing anything for a certain period of time without stopping to revise, edit, or correct any errors. It is a writing strategy developed by Peter Elbow in 1973 and aims at increasing the flow of writing by minimizing self-censorship and concern for grammatical incorrects.¹⁴ Freewriting was designed to help formulate an idea or topic by generating keywords that can be used as a starting point for writing.

Freewriting was extensively used in *Performing Ocean* as a primary method for introspection. The common practice was writing for two to five minutes without stopping. I wrote about my emotions, thoughts, and any words or sentences that I had encountered or formulated randomly prior to freewriting. If I experienced difficulties knowing what to write, I often repeated the last word(s) I wrote or constructed several questions around it until I reached another point of writing

¹⁴ Eric Grunwald, "Freewriting," *The Writing Process* (MIT Global Studies and Languages), accessed April 25, 2022, <https://writingprocess.mit.edu/process/step-1-generate-ideas/instructions/freewriting>.

possibility. English was the prominent language of writing, but Thai was also used. All writings were conducted on a tablet device. It allowed me to experiment with different colors, brush styles, and formats with ease (see figure 3 and figure 4).

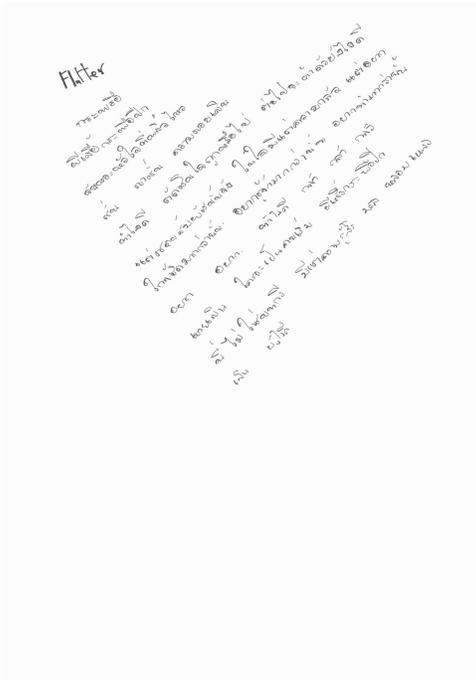


Figure 3. An example of a freeform *sketch*.



Figure 4. A *sketch* that incorporates scribbles.

Photographic self-portrait

Compared with freewriting, taking photographic self-portraits is a more deliberate method of introspection. Although I used self-portraits to convey emotional states, taking portraits of myself was mostly the realization of self-perception rather than an exploration of thoughts through the spontaneous self-reflection that occurs during freewriting. Photographic self-portraits can be made by either setting a camera on a tripod or a surface and having the photos taken through the camera's timer or remote control. Photos can also be taken using the reflection in a mirror or another object. I was inclined toward the former technique, as it allowed me to capture my surroundings and displayed the interaction between objects and me that were deliberately or unintentionally located in the frame.

These objects were mostly random everyday objects that didn't have any significant relations to me or to what I attempted to portray. However, their presence introduced obscurity and contrast, while also indicating certain emotional states or atmosphere in which I was in at that time. In figure 5, I contrasted items that imply vacation and warmer weather (shorts, outdoor folding chairs, and plants) with a hoodie. The strings of the hoodie were fastened tightly to conceal my face. This self-portrait depicted hidden loneliness and alienation that persisted even if I was on a vacation.



Figure 5. An example of a photographic self-portrait.

Monologue recording

Monologues bear resemblance to freewriting in a way that both of them are streams of consciousness. However, monologue recording captures not only immediate states of mind, but also the sound of the particular place at which I am recording, and sometimes how I interact with the environment in real time. The idea of monologue recordings stemmed from a practice of field recording which I have utilized extensively for the last few years as a method of acquiring artistic materials and documenting everyday moments for my personal archive.

Places at which the recordings are made have a significant role in this method of introspection. The content of the monologue recordings sometimes indicates both my history and immediate opinions on each place. For example, in the recording made on the 30th of December 2021

during my sojourn in Bangkok, Thailand, I reminisced about the time I had previously spent at Benchakitti Park and expressed disappointment toward the current state of it while reflecting on how fleeting time is.

Scores

An instruction for a performance or artwork has been used to explore the meanings and boundaries of artistic mediums while carrying personal and political messages since the 20th century. A collection of scores circulated around the Fluxus circle in the 1960s challenged the definition of arts that had been entangled with elitist and institutional attitudes.¹⁵ Artists such as Yoko Ono, Alison Knowles, and George Brecht produced a series of instructions that could be either self-explanatory or left to interpretation due to their abstract and poetic qualities. Although Fluxus-related artists were never unanimous with the definition and values of Fluxus,¹⁶ these instructions embraced mundane actions and objects as a method and medium of art-making. In 1971, musician, composer, and influential figure of electronic music Pauline Oliveros published *Sonic Meditation*, a compilation of instructions that instituted the practice of *Deep Listening*—a practice that deepens personal and interpersonal connections with sounds by expanding sonic perception to include the whole space-continuum of sound and mentally modeling sound by remembering or creating sound.¹⁷ *Sonic Meditation* was originally conducted not as a single performance but as a series of group workshops. It was intended to strengthen individual consciousness within a group setting.

The aforementioned examples are indicative of a more broadened definition of scores. Scores are not only a musical notation that aids reproduction of any music, but they are also instructions, suggestions, or proposals to take part or initiate a performance. *Scores of Performing Ocean* were composed using different *sketches* as musical elements. As the *sketches* are a collection of my personal thoughts and feelings, these *scores* are a manifestation of conscious states made performable.

¹⁵ Tracy DiTolla, “Fluxus - Concepts & Styles,” The Art Story (The Art Story Contributors, January 21, 2012), <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/fluxus/history-and-concepts/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Pauline Oliveros on The Power of Listening | Red Bull Music Academy, YouTube* (Red Bull Music Academy, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMo5j3ebJw0>.

Underlying artistic principles of the *scores* include indeterminacy, use of verbal instruction, and utilization of everyday objects and actions. Indeterminacy is a concept and compositional process that was introduced by John Cage in the 1950s. Cage, who had been exposed to Zen Buddhism a decade prior, strived to renounce the strict fashions in which music was composed, performed, and perceived by introducing non-intentional elements into his compositions. By relinquishing control over sound-making, Cage embraced non-deliberate and/or environmental sounds as music; in his words, “A work should include its environment, is always experimental (unknown in advance).”¹⁸ A broad concept and technique, indeterminacy can happen in different processes of music-making. It can take place as a compositional technique called chance operations which transforms accidental outcomes of any actions—such as tossing a coin—into sound. Indeterminacy can involve inputs from performers. It can be something as simple as Mieko Chiomi’s *Event for the Twilight* (1963) with an instruction “Steep the piano in the water of a pool. Play some piece of F. Liszt on the piano.” Morton Feldman’s *Two Pianos* (1957) is another good example of simple indeterminacy where two performers play the same music at their own time, creating two overlapping versions of the piece.

With the Cagean acceptance of every sonic occurrence as music, a heightened sense of awareness was also given to listening and scrutiny of the acoustic properties of spaces. Many of Alvin Lucier’s compositions utilize textual instructions to realize intricate acoustic phenomena. His composition *Opera with Objects* (1997) explores different objects’ acoustic properties by repeatedly tapping two pencils together and putting them onto the objects to amplify the tapping sound. This inspired me to view mundane objects and basic sound-making as potential musical instruments and performance that could be executed even by non-musicians.

Indeterminacy was prevalent in many of the *scores* for *Performing Ocean* and was employed to emphasize the existence of performers as persons by welcoming their input into the performance. With the exception of *Lan(d)ternfish*, which was solely transcribed with standard western musical notation, most *scores* are open to the decisions of performers in terms of action, length, number of performers, direction of performance, amount of repetition, and instrumentation.

¹⁸ John Cage, in *Theme & Variations* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1982).

Moreover, suggestions like “substitute [action] with your favorite activities” were used to highlight performers’ individuality.

As mentioned earlier, the material gathered as *sketches* was used as the basis for the *scores*. Several compositional techniques—repetition, partial deletion of original material, lengthening of a musical element, and substitution of preexisting material—were applied to the *sketches*. Once a *sketch* was created, I would examine it and highlight words, phrases, or a particular feature that caught my attention. These highlighted passages could determine the actions, structure, textual materials, and instrumentation of the composition. Below (figure 6) shows a list of the *scores* and the compositional techniques that were applied to them.

<i>Scores</i>	Compositional Techniques
<i>to dive or to drown</i>	Repetition
<i>Jellyfish</i>	Substitution of preexisting material / Repetition
<i>I began to</i>	Repetition
<i>Home</i>	Partial deletion of material
<i>make Yourself disappear</i>	Lengthening of a musical element
<i>Lan(d)ternfish</i>	Substitution of preexisting material
<i>Diel Vertical Migration</i>	Not applied

Figure 6. *Scores* and the compositional techniques employed on them.

to dive or to drown

In the beginning of the piece, the words “inhale” and “exhale” appear as a literal instruction to breathe in and out. As it progresses, the words are disassembled and altered in various ways: the space between the two words is eliminated, the prefixes “in” and “ex” are capitalized, the middle letters “ha” are singled out and repeated. These transfigurations remove the semantic

property of the words and render them an implication of possible sound production. The *sketch* entitled “Drowning” (see figure 7) became the basis for *to dive or to drown* (see figure 8). The highlighted part in the *sketch* reads “breathe” repeatedly.

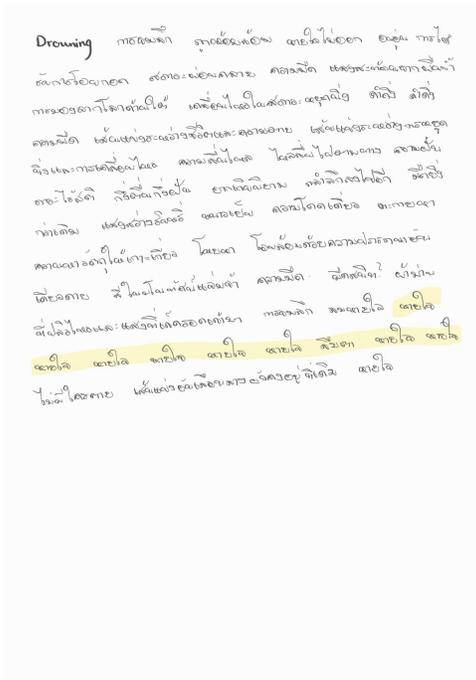


Figure 7. A *sketch* entitled “Drowning”.

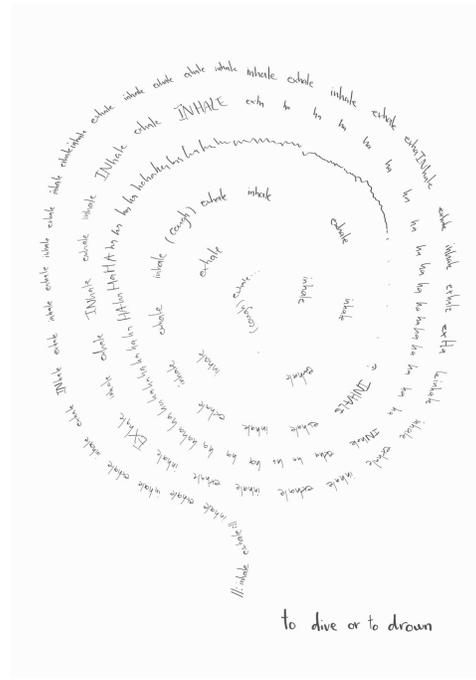


Figure 8. A score of *to dive or to drown*.

Jellyfish

Jellyfish originated from an untitled *sketch* (see figure 9) that was written when I felt hopeless with the direction of my research project, and directed my focus to the study of my favorite animal: jellyfish. This composition consists of an illustration and verbal description of the life cycle of the Scyphozoa species (see figure 10). The end of the text instructs the performer(s) to “Be Jellyfish.” Descriptive words such as [Jellyfish] “metamorphose”, “reproduce”, and “revert” were used to aid interpretation. The instruction was intentionally left ambiguous for performer(s) to reflect on their relationship with the Scyphozoa species, and to seek a better understanding of equally complicated life forms.

If I don't want to do music
 don't do
 If I'm more interested in jellyfish
 then talk about jellyfish
 I think I'm tired of trying to communicate
 Communication is tiring
 Don't try
 Just be yourself
 That alone is enough
 for now
 JUST FOCUS ON YOURSELF

Figure 9. An untitled *sketch* that became the basis for *Jellyfish*.



Figure 10. A *Jellyfish* score that contains an illustration of the life cycle of the Scyphozoa species.

I began to think

I began to think was inspired by Jackson Mac Low's sound poetry performance of his own work *Phone: A Poem & 10 Variations* where original texts were scattered among a variety of phonetic sounds.¹⁹ Multiple sentences and phrases presented in this composition were taken from two untitled *sketches*. The first one (see figure 11) was written in Thai and described how I use writing to cope with loneliness, while the second one (see figure 12) was written in English and expressed the feeling of despair and seemingly endless struggle I endured during my study. Due to their description of similar emotions and mental states, phrases and words from the two *sketches* were combined and used as textual material to be read aloud in *I began to think*. The opening line from the *sketch* in figure 12 was repeated throughout the performance while phrases from the one in figure 11—in Thai and English translation—were distributed around and meant to be read as interruption to the repeated sentence.

¹⁹ Jackson Mac Low on Public Access Poetry, Jan. 26, 1978, YouTube (PennSound, 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLWujEmqwgM>.

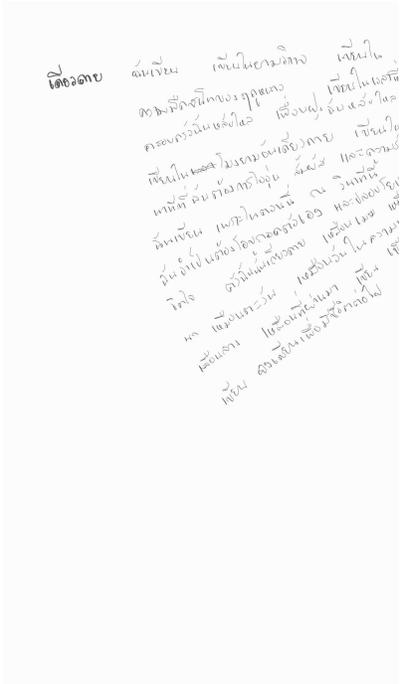


Figure 11. An untitled *sketch* written in Thai of which several phrases appear in the *score*.

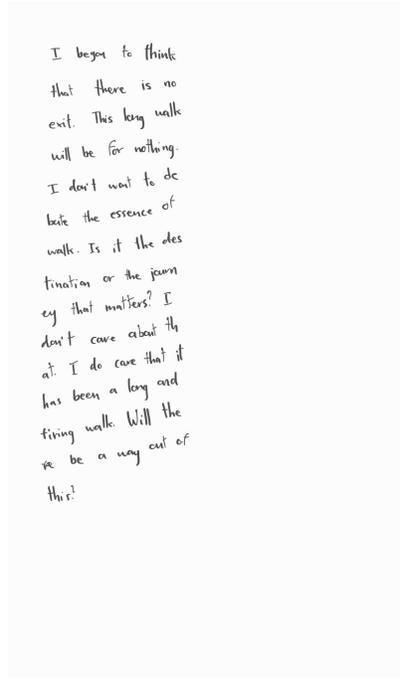


Figure 12. An untitled *sketch* of which the first sentence is repeated in the *score*.

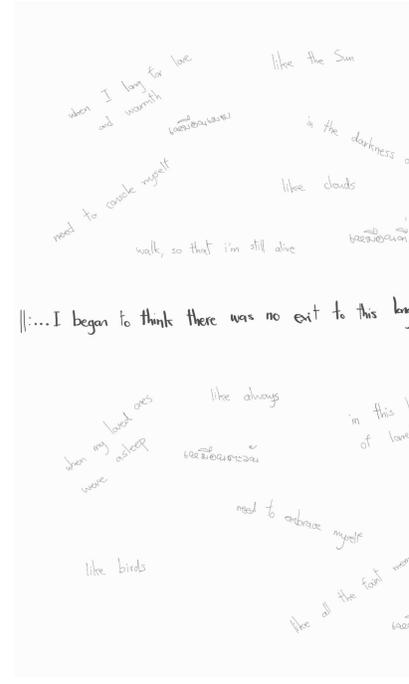


Figure 13. A score of *I began to think*.

Home

In *Home*, performers are invited to spend three minutes reminiscing about people, locations, and sensations that inspire a feeling of belonging. They are instructed to write about those memories (see figure 15). At the end, the writing should be destroyed in any fashion that the circumstance allows, e.g., by burning or tearing the material the writing is made on. *Home* was composed in Iceland after I inspected an untitled *sketch* (see figure 14) made during my visit to Bangkok, Thailand. It depicts the deteriorating physical condition of the house I grew up in. *Home* is both an invitation for performer(s) to reflect on their definitions of a home, and evidence of homesickness that not only I experience.

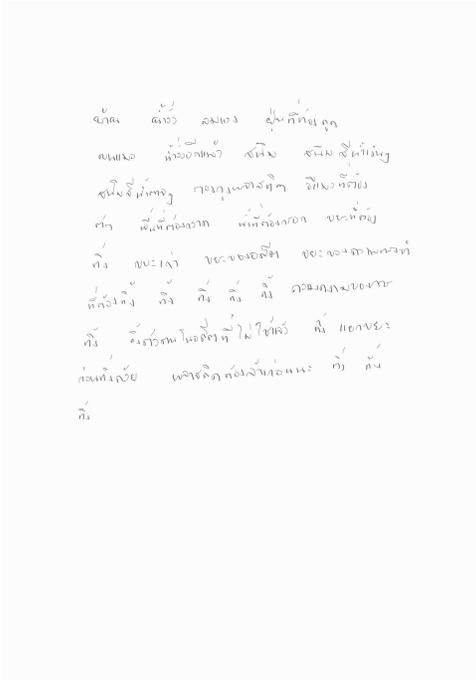


Figure 14. An untitled *sketch* depicting the deteriorating physical condition of the house

I grew up.

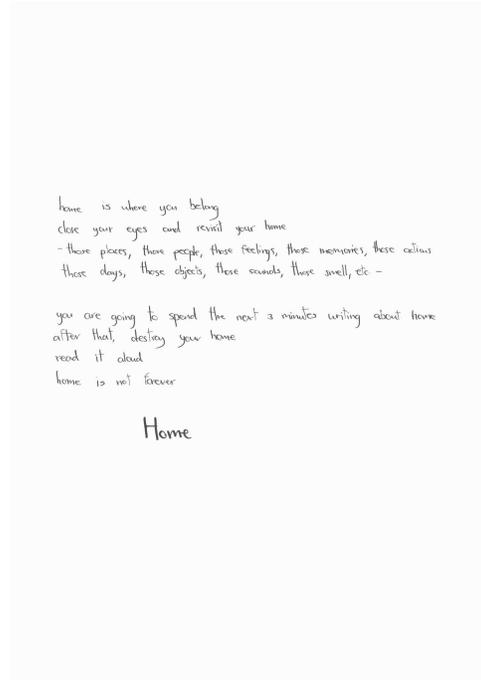


Figure 15. A score of *Home*.

make Yourself disappear

In this piece, performer(s) are provided with an instruction to make tea in an extremely slow manner. They are offered an opportunity to replace tea-making with their favorite activities. Similar to the elimination of semantics in *to dive or to drown*, extreme prolongation in this piece gives mundane action a different significance. Figure 16 shows a series of self-portraits of me disappearing from the photos. These *sketches* became the foundation of the composition *make Yourself disappear* (see figure 17).



Figure 16. A series of photographic self-portraits used for the piece.

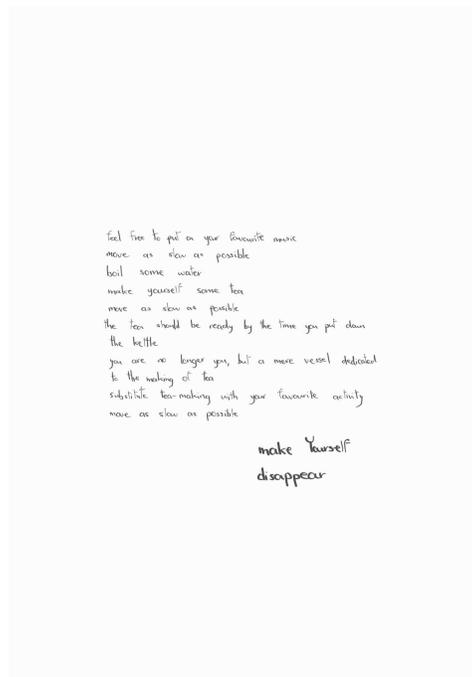


Figure 17. A Score of *make Yourself disappear*

Lan(d)ternfish

Lan(d)ternfish is an arrangement of the first Contrapunctus of Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Art of Fugue* for four table lamps (see figure 18). Before *Lan(d)ternfish* was composed, I decided to perform the Contrapunctus in *make Yourself disappear* as my "favorite activity." Inspired by the carbon cycle occurring in the ocean, the Contrapunctus was reused in *Lan(d)ternfish*.

The instrumentation is based on one monologue that mentions flickering city lights. *Lan(d)ternfish* attempts to imitate a bioluminescent emission of lanternfish living in the ocean's mesopelagic zone. It is complemented with a pair of my photographic portraits with visible and hidden faces which indicates the concealment of my true identity (see figure 19). The flickering light of the lamps, therefore, represents the bioluminescent emission of lanternfish and visible and invisible facades of my personality.

Musical score for 'Lan(d)ternfish' featuring four staves labeled Lamp 1, Lamp 2, Lamp 3, and Lamp 4. The score is in 2/2 time and includes dynamic markings such as *on*, *off*, *simile*, and *ff*. The piece concludes with the handwritten title 'Lan(d)ternfish'.

Fig. 18: The first page of *Lan(d)ternfish*.

A preface page containing three elements: a detailed illustration of a lanternfish, a short musical score in treble and bass clefs, and a photograph of two people in a dark room, likely self-portraits of the performers.

Figure 19. A preface containing a lanternfish, beginning of the Contrapunctus, and the self-portraits.

Diel Vertical Migration

Diel vertical migration is a daily migration of marine life from the mesopelagic zone to the surface and back. I connected the idea of animal migration with contents of consciousness, such as unspoken emotions, memories, and other intrapersonal communication, that may occupy the mind for some period of time before being taken over by daily routines. In *Diel Vertical Migration*, three performers carried a Bluetooth speaker playing pre-recorded recitation of all *sketches* that had been done through freewriting. They slowly moved in the dark at random pace and direction while gradually raising the volume of the recordings.

Diel Vertical Migration is different from the other compositions as it is not based on a *sketch*, but directly on an oceanic phenomenon of the same name which I learnt while researching about the mesopelagic zone. The written instructions of *Diel Vertical Migration* were deliberately left vague and minimal. Instead, the focus was placed on the explanation diel vertical migration (see

figure 20). This was to give emphasis on diel vertical migration, the phenomenon, and to offer a more abstract instruction for the audience to interpret.

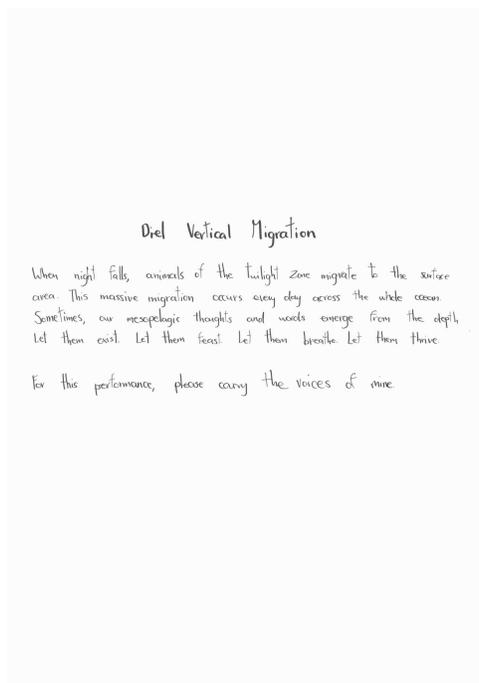


Figure 20. An instruction of *Diel Vertical Migration*

Interpretation

Although the *scores* give a partial view into my personal experience and various psychological states, they are designed to receive and integrate input from performers. The realization of *sketches* and *scores* requires, to some extent, *interpretation*. Since methods of self-expression are a subject of interest in this research, It is through the *interpretation* of the *scores* that the personality of the performers can manifest. In short, most of the *scores* are open to interpretation because they are intended to be a pathway of expression for both performers and me. Strong interpretative aspects that reflect said value can be found in *Home* and *make Yourself disappear* where performers are invited to contemplate their personal definitions of home and select their favorite activities to perform respectively.

In the showcase of *Performing Ocean*, three performers interpreted and performed different actions (metamorphose, revert, and duplicate) in *Jellyfish* with three different approaches: creating sound with a set of sound bells, folding paper cranes, and playing on the flute. On the same occasion I performed *make Yourself disappear* on the piano, playing Bach's first Contrapunctus from *The Art of Fugue* very slowly (each single note lasted around ten seconds) and with minimal body movement. I also avoided musical practices that are common when performing a classical music composition, such as making musical phrasing, highlighting main theme/melody, and varying dynamics. The decision to abandon the practices that constitute a major part of my musical education was to draw attention to the emergence of sound instead of the performer, thus making myself disappear.

Chapter IV: The Discovery

Whether it is deep diving into one's inner world or expanding one's peripheral view of the outer world, *Performing Ocean* involves a careful examination of oneself and of one's personal ties with their surroundings.

As a musician, I expanded my musical practices to include performance studies and unconventional composition in this research project. I refused to adhere to traditional western musical notation, and the concept of composition as determined musical text that demands perfect rendering from musicians. Instead, I adopted activities I do for leisure—zoology, writing, field recording, and photography—as research focus and methodology. Freewriting, photographic self-portrait, and monologue recording became fundamental methods of introspection and obtaining *sketches*. Many *scores* utilize texts and advocate simple actions, such as reading aloud and tea-making, as a form of performances. Ultimately, the subjects I have been fascinated with such as jellyfish, the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, and the ocean's mesopelagic zone were all interwoven into this artistic research project.

As much as it might appear to be, I cannot conclude that it was my intention to reject the musical tradition I had undertaken as a classical pianist. On the contrary, the aforesaid examples were the ways I reconciled my increasing interests in what lies outside of the musical world with my musical background. In *make Yourself disappear*, I chose to perform a classical repertoire on an instrument with which I commenced my musical education, while embracing the method and principle of *Performing Ocean*. The reconciliation was so that I could deepen the connection I have with my surroundings through music.

Evidently, the metaphor between the human mind and the ocean has already been pointed out numerous times in this research. Yet, the metaphor still holds several relevant truths. Firstly, the ocean and the human mind are always in flux and under the influence of other beings. How a person perceives past events or anticipates the future depends largely on their current states of mind, which are always affected by internal and external factors: weather, quality of sleep, daily

tasks, responsibility, physical and psychological needs, etc. Furthermore, how a person acts according to their states of mind becomes another factor that affects another person. This situation where coexisting entities constantly interact and have profound impacts on each other exists in every ecosystem, human or non-human.

Secondly, to many people knowledge of both the ocean and the human mind is often indirect as there are not many who have gained first-hand insight into the deep ocean and the human mind. As with all kinds of knowledge, it might take decades for one to understand any phenomenon thoroughly. *Performing Ocean: An Exploration of Intrapersonal Communication within Artistic Research* was not intended to apprehend or explain states of consciousness in a scientific manner. It originally functioned as my mitigation to the incessant thoughts and inner monologue derived from a period of psychological distress—an unhealthy type of intrapersonal communication. By working through this highly personal artistic research I, nonetheless, obtained several points of interest.

At a rudimentary level of its function, introspection is a capable tool for the regulation of emotions. By engaging introspection as an artistic process, I was able to recognize and express my emotions or thoughts before I needed to proceed with rationality. Yet, on multiple occasions, I noticed my own reluctance to verbally express emotions. It prompted me to investigate the reasons behind the unwillingness to reveal my emotional contents despite the fact that I was the sole spectator. This is an example of how intrapersonal communication can reflect one's personality and behavior. Although the capability of introspection has been evident to me, it is important to acknowledge that introspection is not a cure for psychological afflictions. Channeling one's state of being into artistic creations is useful for self-regulation, but one should not ignore any external circumstances that may lie beyond one's control.

External circumstances that have a significant impact on the oceans are human actions. Ocean acidification, microplastics, and loss of biodiversity are among ongoing human-contributed crises in the oceans. As symbiotic connections take place between every entity, human or non-human, every individual is no less susceptible to their environment. I see *Performing Ocean* as a prototype for a model that can strengthen the bonds between people and their psyche,

between people and people, between people and non-human entities, and between people and their surroundings.

Perhaps there is truth behind Freud's relatively cynical view of human nature, that humans are dictated by pleasure-seeking drives. And perhaps the genesis of this research is explainable with that concept. Nonetheless, I believe that being able to identify and fulfill one's values and wishes is the first step before one can extend empathy toward other people and non-human beings. Or on the contrary, not being able to identify and fulfill one's values and wishes might be the first step toward empathy. This riddle will continue to stay with me in my future practice, as an art practitioner and an ocean explorer.

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